



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

HONOLULU

NEWS RELEASE

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

For Immediate Release: July 20, 2004

GOVERNOR LINGLE MEETS WITH PRIVATE, NON-PROFIT AGENCIES TO EXPLORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS

HONOLULU – Governor Linda Lingle met yesterday with several private land developers, as well as representatives from non-profit organizations and government agencies that serve the homeless to begin developing a six-year plan to address Hawai'i's affordable rental housing shortage.

The meeting took place four days after Governor Lingle announced her Administration's plans to form partnerships with the private sector, the counties, and non-profit organizations to meet the demand for approximately 17,000 affordable rental units throughout the state over the next six years.

"The homeless problem facing our state has grown too large for any one organization or company to solve on its own," said Governor Lingle. "As a state, we have ignored this issue for too long, and now as a community, we will work together to find viable solutions to provide housing for our residents. There is a sense of urgency in tackling this problem, because homelessness affects everyone in the state, if not directly then through the impact it is having on the fabric of our communities, land values, businesses and tourism."

Some of the outcomes of yesterday's meeting include:

- The formation of a private fund to establish a "one-stop shop" to facilitate the planning, financing, permitting, constructing and managing of affordable rental projects. The one-stop shop will enable developers to go to one source for assistance on affordable rental housing. Financing for the one-stop shop will be through private money from the business community and no state funds will be used.

- Governor Lingle will host a meeting with the county mayors, council chairs, planning commission chairs, and planning directors to discuss how the four counties and the state can work together to reduce the time and “red tape” involved in the permitting process.
- A state review of suitable property in urban areas will be conducted. While Governor Lingle announced last week that her Administration has identified state land on the Big Island and Kauaʻi, meeting participants said there is a need to focus on the urban core of Oʻahu and other islands, where jobs and services are most accessible. The private sector participants committed to approach private land owners, including various trusts about donating parcels or leasing land for nominal amounts.

“The lack of affordable rentals is a serious problem for many working families, so this is a critical issue for the business community,” said Christine Camp Friedman, chairwoman of the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaiʻi and managing director of Avalon Development Company.

Yesterday’s meeting was attended by 20 individuals representing organizations and companies, including Institute for Human Services (IHS), Chamber of Commerce of Hawaiʻi, Kalihi Palama Health Center, Office of Social Ministry, Schuler Homes Hawaiʻi, Stanford Carr Development, Haseko Construction, Ko Olin Company, Castle & Cooke, Armstrong Properties, Bank of Hawaiʻi, Honsadore Lumber Company, Housing and Community Development Corporation of Hawaiʻi (HCDCH), Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL), and Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

“For years service providers like us have worked to help the homeless, but we’ve never met with developers who build homes that these people need,” said meeting participant Carol Ignacio of the Office of Social Ministry of Hilo, which provides services to the poor and marginalized in Hawaiʻi County. “Now, having met some developers and others who have the resources and expertise to do something about building affordable housing, I’m encouraged and hopeful that we can work together to address this serious problem in our state.”

“We’re doing this because there’s a need and it’s the right thing to do for the community,” said Stanford Carr, of Stanford Carr Development. “As developers, we agree with the Governor that this is a critical problem for our state, and if we don’t address it now, and do it together, we will face serious social and economic consequences.”

Last Thursday, during the Chamber of Commerce of Hawai'i's annual meeting, Governor Lingle outlined six key action steps her Administration is working on to address the homeless problem, including: mobilizing private developers, collaborating with the non-profit sector, identifying suitable land, working with county governments, increasing the bonding authority for the state's housing agency, and increasing the standard deduction for Hawai'i's lowest wage earners. The Administration will incorporate these action steps into the six-year plan.

"We owe the individuals and organizations who have dedicated their lives to helping the homeless a great deal of appreciation, but we can no longer expect just a handful of people to shoulder this effort," the Governor added. "Yesterday's meeting was the first of many opportunities for different sectors to brainstorm ideas and pool our resources to start building safe, clean, affordable rental housing.

"We've already received a lot of feedback and ideas from people who want to get involved, and they will have a chance to participate at a public forum on August 17 at the State Capitol," she said. The forum, which is hosted by HCDCH, is being held in response to a Senate concurrent resolution.

The most recent statewide study on homelessness, conducted by SMS Research, reports that on any given day 6,029 people are homeless – 3,297 in the City and County of Honolulu, 1,153 in Maui County, 1,243 in Hawai'i County and 336 in Kaua'i County. This total homeless population is nearly double that of 1999, when the estimated total was 3,171 individuals.

The study was commissioned by the counties of Maui, Kaua'i and Hawai'i and the City and County of Honolulu. It was conducted in partnership with the state Department of Hawaiian Homelands, Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism and the Housing and Community Development Corporation of Hawai'i.

The study also found that the majority of the 1,000 homeless individuals who submitted a survey or were interviewed were local residents who have lived in Hawai'i for more than 20 years.

Housing officials statewide are using federal monies to develop programs that address a variety of issues contributing to homelessness. In the study, the reasons for being homeless varied, with 41 percent of respondents stating they had difficulty paying rent and were evicted, while others cited unemployment (21.3 percent) and drug abuse (16.7 percent).

“We have the knowledge, experience and community support to help us minimize chronic homelessness in Hawai`i,” said Stephanie Aveiro, HCDCH executive director. “We are bringing our resources together and developing a comprehensive, coordinated approach to addressing this critical issue.

“There are many variables to homelessness, and the lack of affordable housing in Hawai`i is a major contributing factor,” said Aveiro. “Government alone can’t end chronic homelessness, which is why we are working diligently with the private sector and the community to identify and develop affordable housing in areas where it is most needed.”

For more information on the study or to access a copy, visit the HCDCH Web site at www.hcdch.hawaii.gov. Information is also available from the following government officials:

- State (808-832-5931) – Sandra Miyoshi, homeless programs administrator;
- City and County of Honolulu (808-527-5092) – Keith Ishida, Department of Community Services planner;
- Hawai`i County (808-961-8379) – Jeremy McComber, housing and community development specialist;
- Kaua`i County (808-241-6809) – Jo Shimamoto, community development block grant coordinator;
- Maui County (808-242-7600, x238) – Michael Davis, homeless services coordinator.

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